

North Chicago, IL -Congressman Mark Kirk joined North Chicago's Mayor, Navy leaders and Commerce Department officials for a groundbreaking ceremony to reopen the 22nd street crossing in North Chicago – the essential step in revitalizing the city's business district. This project will help create new jobs and increase revenues for local schools.

Kirk gave federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) officials a first-hand look at the 22nd Street site in 2001, highlighting the project's importance in lowering unemployment and increasing property values. In 2003, Kirk secured more than \$1 million from the EDA to invest in the project and requested \$1 million more this year.

"Re-opening 22nd street is critical to restarting North Chicago's retail business district," said Kirk. "With Great Lakes training more than 30,000 recruits annually, full access for Gate 4 of the base will increase property and sales tax revenue. It will also create jobs and new revenue for local schools."

Kirk worked with the Navy on a \$4 million redesign of the Navy's Gate 4 in anticipation of the 22nd street project. Currently, the Union Pacific Railroad cuts off access to Great Lakes, ruining the business climate for North Chicago. A survey found that many sailors now go to Gurnee via Gate 1.

Their journey bypasses North Chicago's defunct business corridor.

With the opening of Gate 4, Navy and civilian commuters will have shorter travel times to destinations in Northern Illinois.

The increased traffic across 22

nd

street will dramatically change the business climate along North Chicago's retail corridor.

Closed in 1991, Gate 4's closure devastated North Chicago's commercial district. The loss of revenue from sailors on the base forced many retail tenants to close. Many businesses catering to sailors moved to far locations in Vernon Hills or Gurnee. Re-opening of the 22nd

street crossing will help drive the economic rebirth of North Chicago as retailers attract traffic leaving the base via the new Gate 4.

"We have spent almost \$1 billion to upgrade Great Lakes. Now its time to closely connect this economic engine to the rebirth of North Chicago's business community," said Congressman Kirk. "This project will also help Mayor Rockingham and I attract other federal economic development programs to fuel North Chicago's recovery."

Joining Kirk at the groundbreaking were North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham, Captain Reme Hemstreet of Naval Station Great Lakes, and Mohammed Saeed, Project Manager, EDA. Gate 4 and the 22nd Street crossing are scheduled to open to vehicular traffic in December.

Contact: Matt Towson
847-940-0202
cell: 773-454-5396